

Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce

2011 State Legislative Agenda:

Education

The Chamber supports improvement strategies that link education and workforce development in a seamless manner, preparing a student for whatever future they might choose and ensuring the long-term viability of our local economy. The Chamber's goal is to build the best workforce and ensure our companies have the talent they need to stay competitive.

Special Council on Tax Reform & Fairness for Georgians

The Chamber supports the efforts of the Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness for Georgians with their attempt to update and modernize the tax code. Regarding this effort, the Chamber supports 1) changes to state tax policy that encourage economic growth, entrepreneurship and prosperity, 2) creation of an independent trial court over tax disputes involving the Georgia Department of Revenue Tax Court and 3) enhance the administration and collection of taxes at the state level.

Sales Tax Holidays

The Chamber supports providing a sales tax holiday at the beginning of the school year that would exempt sales tax on back-to-school items. The exemption would last at least four days. An additional sales tax holiday would exempt tax on energy efficient products.

Trauma Care

The Chamber supports legislative efforts to stabilize and enhance the trauma care network. The network should be supported either by existing government funds or additional revenue sources which are dedicated, predictable, broadly imposed and government-collected. Further, the allocation of such funds should be made in accordance with the formula established by the Georgia Trauma Care Network Commission.

Alternative Energy & Conservation

The Chamber supports legislation for creating a balanced, sustainable, reliable and affordable solution to our energy needs.

The Chamber supports public policies that provide support for: (1) efforts to optimize energy efficiency that will lead to long-term conservation practices, (2) conversion to more environmental friendly forms of energy generation, including nuclear and clean coal technologies, (3) research and development of alternative energy sources such as bio-fuels, solar power, geothermal, tidal energy and other renewable fuels produced by agronomic crops and new energy technologies, (4) energy and environmental issues that are sensitive to their short-term and long-term economic impact and that utilize proven and effective technology based on sound science.

The Chamber opposes legislation (1) that is overly burdensome or imposes new regulations that would stifle systems that feed economic development and job growth, (2) policies that are not based on sound science or data or lack current technology for effective implementation.

Monitor Water Council

The Chamber supports the Suwannee – Satilla Regional Water Council's vision of managing water resources in a sustainable manner under Georgia's regulated riparian and regulated reasonable use laws that is based on sound science and consistent historical data for population and water resource use and needs assessment projections. Our common goal is to support the State and Region's economy, to protect public health and natural resources and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens while preserving the private property rights of Georgia's landowners and in consideration of the need to enhance resource augmentation and efficiency opportunities. The Chamber will monitor the progress of the Suwannee – Satilla Regional Water Council and the Regional Advisory Committees with the goal of reaching a sustainable, reliable, affordable Agricultural, Industrial and Municipal water use and water quality policy.

Clinic for the Working Uninsured

The Chamber supports public and private funding options for safety net clinics that provide access to health care for the working uninsured to ensure that present and future needs are met.

Civil Justice Reform

The Chamber supports monitoring and protecting the important legal and civil justice reforms that were adopted in 2005 including the requirement to prove gross negligence with regard to emergency room liability, the elimination of joint and several liability and provisions to discourage frivolous litigation. The Chamber supports caps on on-economic damages and opposes legislation that further weakens the reforms of 2005 and supports the reduction of the rapid growth of medical liability awards and insurance costs.

Wellness Statement

The Chamber supports the creation of insurance products that provide incentives to reward healthy lifestyles, with appropriate consideration for cost effectiveness.

Sales Tax Exemption on Energy Used for Manufacturing

The Chamber supports providing an exemption with respect to State (not local) sales and use tax for the cost of energy (natural or artificial gas, electricity, or any other energy) used directly in the production of manufactured goods.

Transportation

The Chamber supports the development of a thoughtful strategy that will provide the needed funding to address transportation funding needs at both the state and local level. The funding solution strategy should provide increased, dedicated, and reliable long-term funding for transportation maintenance and improvements. The Chamber will continue to actively promote top priority projects identified in the City of Valdosta's Transportation Master Plan, as well as our long-standing support for the widening of State Road 133.